

SAN FRANCISCO BAY CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

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TO: Commissioners and Alternates

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SUBJECT: Briefing on San Francisco Waterfront Working Group
(For Commission information only)

Staff Summary

On March 1, 2012, the Commission approved amendments to the *San Francisco Waterfront Special Area Plan* allowing the relocation of the City and County of San Francisco's primary cruise ship terminal to Pier 27 and the possible retention of the entire Pier 23 shed. The amendment, which was requested by the Port of San Francisco, eliminated an open water basin, reduced public access and Bay views on and around Pier 27, and changed the public plaza planned for Pier 27. In order to replace these public benefits, the amendment required that public access and shed removal be sited on nearby piers and that the Port and BCDC initiate a public process to identify a new open water basin, new locations for public spaces and an evaluation of the Port's historic resources and its approach for preserving the Embarcadero Historic District. This staff report provides an update of the public process, the preliminary findings and next steps.

Staff Report

Background. Over the last decade, the San Francisco waterfront has undergone a number of positive changes. There are more public spaces, more restaurants and retail, better views and public access. Once inaccessible areas are now popular, well-loved places. The pace of this change over the last several years has continued, including the relocation of the Exploratorium to Pier 15, the 34th America's Cup events, the relocation of the James R. Herman Cruise Ship Terminal to Pier 27 and the development of Brannan Street Wharf public open space.

Many of these recent projects have required amendments to the *San Francisco Waterfront Special Area Plan* (SAP) and this has created a concern that, rather than being comprehensively planned, the waterfront is being planned project-by-project. Rather than projects fitting into a well-considered network of open spaces, Bay views and public access and adhering to comprehensive approaches to parking, transportation and historic preservation, some believe these issues are being addressed as an afterthought. In response to these concerns, the amendment for the cruise ship terminal project required a planning process to examine key issues, taking a waterfront-wide approach.



Making San Francisco Bay Better

On March 1, 2012, the Commission approved a resolution to amend the SAP. The amendment, requested by the Port of San Francisco, relocated the City of San Francisco's primary cruise ship terminal to Pier 27, allowed for the possible retention of the entire Pier 23 shed and affected a number of the public benefits that the SAP required at Pier 27. These public benefits included an open water basin located between Piers 19 and 27, the removal of a portion of the Pier 23 shed to open up views of the Bay, a public plaza oriented to the new open water basin and shed removal and public access along the apron of Pier 27 and the tip of Piers 27 and 29. In order to ensure that those benefits still occurred along the waterfront, the amendment required that public access and shed removal be sited on nearby piers. Additionally, the cruise ship terminal amendment required that the Port and BCDC develop a planning effort to identify new locations for an open water basin, new public spaces and an evaluation of the Port's historic resources and its approach to preserving the Embarcadero Historic District. The purpose of this briefing is to provide an update on the planning process, preliminary findings from the process and outline the next steps.

San Francisco Waterfront Working Group Process and Preliminary Findings. Since the staff last updated the Commission on the planning process, the working group has met on a monthly basis to discuss and provide input on issues that include way finding, historic resources, the relationship between public access and maritime uses, access and facilities for water-oriented recreation, open water basins and several specific sites — including the unplanned public space at the end of Pier 27-29, Ferry Plaza and Fisherman's Wharf. In addition to meetings, the group has also visited sites on several field trips to Fisherman's Wharf, the area from Pier 19 to Pier 35 and Ferry Plaza.

Below are some preliminary findings from the working group:

- Way finding, amenities (i.e., bicycle parking, restrooms, water fountains) and interpretation need improvement in order to increase and enhance the use of existing and future public access and public spaces. Use design, social media, signage, technology and other strategies to make these improvements.
- The Embarcadero Promenade and roadway are often over-crowded with multiple users and uses. Identifying improvements to bicycle travel, better connections between the west side and the east side of the roadway and more public areas adjacent to the promenade may improve the way this popular thoroughfare functions.
- Parking should be strongly discouraged on the east side of the Embarcadero Promenade. The number of automobile encroachments into and across the promenade should be reduced and future encroachments should not be added.
- The public spaces and public access at Ferry Plaza do not currently provide much benefit for the public. However, due to the popularity of the surrounding area, the non-historic buildings on much of the site and the opportunity for improved Bay views there, future public benefits and public improvements should be focused at the Ferry Plaza location.
- The easternmost tip of Pier 27-29 provides incredible and unique views of the Bay, the surrounding Bay shoreline and back to San Francisco. Due to the distance of the site from the Embarcadero Promenade, it will be important to find ways to draw people to the site through way finding, design, and unique uses and activities.
- Public access, public open spaces and way finding all need to be improved in Fisherman's Wharf. There are some unique and underutilized areas where certain improvements could highlight the unique and important fishing history and maritime character of the area.
- The importance of maritime uses was recognized, and priority maritime locations within the Port were identified. There is a need for a policy framework that would provide for priority maritime berthing sites having reduced or no public access requirements.

- Marginal wharves provide an opportunity for public access and public spaces close to the Embarcadero Promenade and in already popular locations. Pocket parks, pop up parks and other temporary and permanent improvements should be made that would include amenities to allow for the enjoyment of the Bay, the promenade and the activity along the waterfront.
- The historic district is an important public benefit and historic resources should be retained and preserved if possible, including the entire Pier 23 shed. Non-historic structures should be prioritized first for shed and building removal to improve views and increase open water.
- Identify and implement locations for amenities and launch areas to improve water-oriented recreation that considers safety and security of all users on the Bay. Identify the location or locations for non-profit providers to serve the community by providing access on to the Bay. Identify this use specifically as a public benefit.
- Implementation, including funding and timing, needs to be identified for the public benefits prioritized by the working group to ensure that the process is more than a planning exercise and that actions are prioritized to make the identified improvements.
- Subcommittees should be developed to provide more detail and specificity on several issues and locations, including Ferry Plaza, Fisherman's Wharf and way finding.

The next steps for the working group are:

- **March and April 2014.** Meet in subcommittees on Ferry Plaza, Fisherman's Wharf and way finding, and port wide amenities and improvements. With the subcommittees, develop more specific policy, design, implementation and funding recommendations and ideas for these issues and locations.
- **April/May 2014.** Present findings and recommendations to the public in a public workshop. Revise based on public input.
- **June through September 2014.** Present findings and recommendations to the Port and BCDC commissions that will result in a draft proposal to amend BCDC's SAP and the Port's Waterfront Land Use Plan. This would include the identification of funding and implementation opportunities for new public benefits and waterfront improvements.